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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MIKE ROUNDS, a Senator from the State of South Dakota.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, instruct us in the way we should go. Direct the steps of our lawmakers, leading them beside still waters as You restore their souls. As they put their trust in You, be for them a shield of defense. Lord, preserve them, keeping them from stumbling or slipping. Enable them to rejoice because Your goodness and mercies endure forever. May our Senators remember that You love righteousness and justice. May this knowledge motivate them to follow Your precepts, earnestly striving to glorify Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,

Washington, DC, February 12, 2016.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MIKE ROUNDS, a Sen-

ator from the State of South Dakota, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. ROUNDS thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

RECOGNIZING MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, more than 100 years ago, Albert Einstein proposed the theory of relativity. He predicted that violent events in the early universe shocked the cosmos, sending gravity waves rippling through the fabric of space time. By the time these waves reached Earth, they would be "vanishingly small," and, with the technology available in Einstein's day, impossible to detect. But after 100 more years of science and innovation, scientists announced yesterday that, with their new cosmic hearing aid, they have heard the first ripples from space.

I congratulate the men and women of the LIGO Scientific Collaboration, an international project of over 900 scientists led by MIT and Caltech, for

their hard work and dedication. Using cutting-edge facilities in Louisiana and Washington State, scientists detected a vibration in the space-time continuum, opening our ears, not just our eyes, to space.

A billion years ago in a distant galaxy, two black holes spiraled inward on each other. Their eventual collapse released the energy of a billion trillion suns in a fraction of a second and sent gravity waves rippling through space and time. Gravity waves compress space in one direction and stretch it in the other. Since this push and pull weakens with distance, scientists have long thought gravity waves would be too faint to measure on Earth. But yesterday scientists proved such skepticism wrong. With their latest detector at the ready, scientists were waiting and listening for any faint sign of these waves. And on September 14, 2015, scientists heard a short chirp on their instruments that turned out to be the billion-year echo of a faraway past.

For the first time, we can hear the *Musica Universalis* because of our investment in basic science research. Throughout the 40-year, \$1.1 billion project, the National Science Foundation withstood harsh criticism about their funding to support the detection of gravitational waves that were thought to be undetectable on Earth. But it was NSF's commitment to basic science research and the dedication of Dr. Rainer Weiss of MIT, Dr. Kip Thorne of Caltech, Dr. Ronald Drever of the University of Glasgow, and an international team of scientists that has made yesterday's announcement possible.

This discovery is a triumph for science and a testament to the payoff of long-term public investment in basic science research. It further illuminates our understanding of the universe and opens the door for a whole new way of peering into the cosmos. I congratulate all those involved in turning on the sound to the stars.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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